

Legislative Hearing on HB 626

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Providing informational testimony of on behalf of

WWAMI Medical Education Program

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(Mr. Chairman/Madame Chair) and members of the Legislature, for the record my name is Dr. Jane Shelby. I am associated with the Montana WWAMI Medical Education Program, in Bozeman, Montana.

Montana is facing a critical physician workforce shortage, we need more doctors to practice in rural and underserved communities in the state. The primary care statistics in Montana are staggering. In fact, ***54/56 Montana counties are federally designated in part or total as primary care shortage areas. Currently we are short a total of 53 primary care providers in those counties. There are 11 counties in Montana with no physicians.***

The need for physicians will increase sharply in the future, as the population grows older and medical care is needed for the elderly and those Montanans with chronic diseases, many of which are associated with tobacco use. This will put additional pressure on the health care delivery system in Montana. We will need even more doctors in the near future to care for these patients- by 2025 25% of our population will be 65 or older, making Montana 3rd in the nation in the proportion of elderly in the state.

We also have an aging physician population- 45% of Montana's physicians are 55 or older- one of the oldest physician workforces in the nation.

For the past couple of years I have provided leadership for the Montana WWAMI program- "Montana's Medical School." The Montana WWAMI program is working to help meet this current and looming physician workforce need. The WWAMI program is a unique 5 state partnership, connected to a top ten medical school to give a world class medical education for Montana WWAMI medical students.

We have established a unique program that targets the need for committed MT WWAMI graduates to return to Montana and practice medicine in our rural communities- the TRUST program (Targeted Rural Underserved Track).

Using revenue from the Tobacco Tax, it is proposed that the TRUST program be expanded to accelerate the development of a cadre of medical students with expressed commitment to primary care and other needed specialties in the rural and underserved areas of Montana-the *Montana Health Service Corps*.

- Increase WWAMI class size by 10 to 30 and make 1/3 of the class (10) train in the Montana TRUST program -providing the TRUST students a **Montana Health Service Corps Scholarship** with the **commitment** to return and practice in a rural or underserved area of MT for 4 years after completion of residency training.
- Students must choose from the following specialties: Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, OB/GYN, Psychiatry and General Surgery.
- To augment graduate medical training in the state, revenue will provide support for Primary care residency expansion within Montana.
- And provide support for the administrative aspect of the Montana TRUST program and Montana Health Services Corps.

Thank you for this opportunity to present today, and I am available for any questions members of the Legislature might have.